

the dignity which it confers on a rational being, its accordance to the "reason and fitness of things," its conformity and analogy to much of what may be discerned in the order of the universe. It would also have been easy to pass from virtue in the abstract, into an illustration and enforcement of the several distinct virtues, as arranged in a practical system. And if it should be asked, Why may not some writers employ their speculations on those parts and views of moral truth which are thus independent of the gospel, leaving it to other men to Christianize the whole by the addition of the evangelical relations, motives, and conditions?—I readily answer, that this may sometimes very properly be done. An author may render good service by demonstrating, for instance, the utility of virtue in general, or of any particular virtue, as shown in its effect on the prosperity of states, of smaller communities, and of individuals; in its conduciveness to health, mental tranquillity, social confidence, and the like. In doing this, he would expressly take a marked ground, and aim at a specific object. He would not (or should not) let it be imagined for a moment that such particular views embrace all that is of essential interest in the reasons and relations of moral rectitude. It would be plainly understood that other considerations, of the highest importance, recognising, in all our obligations to virtue, our relations with God, with a spiritual economy, with a future life, are indispensable to a complete moral theory. But the charge against the moral philosophers is meant to be applied to those who, not professing to have any such specific and limited scope, but assuming the office of moralist in its most comprehensive character, and making themselves responsible as teachers of virtue in its whole extent, have yet quite forgotten the vital implication of ethical with evangelical truth.

When I mention our Historians, it will instantly occur to you, that the very foremost names in this department import everything that is deadly to the Christian religion itself, as a divine communication, and therefore lie under a condemnation of a different kind. But may not many others, who would have repelled the imputation of being enemies to the Christian cause, be arraigned of having forgotten what was clue from its friends? The historian intends his work **to**